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ABSTRACT

This document from the task force charged with assessing Wisconsin's adult illiteracy problem and recommending what to do about it reports that the state has 492,720 residents who are at or below the level of functional illiteracy and another 412,720 considered to be "at-risk" due to the increased demand for higher-level basic skills in an Information Age society. (Adult literacy is defined as the poseession of such skills as reading, writing, speaking, and computing necessary to function as individuals, family and community members, citizens, and consumers and workers in society.) The following forces are blamed for the increasing problem of illiteracy: (1) the public school dropout rate; (2) the continuing immigration of persons at the functionally illiterate level; (3) the gradual erosion of basic skills levels through lack of application; and (4) the increasing demand for higher-level basic skills. In 1987, the four principal providers of adult literacy education in Wisconsin served about 5 percent of the illiterate population. The task force recommends formation of a Wisconsin Literacy Council and a statewide network of local literacy councils. These councils should strive for universal adult literacy in the state by the year 2000. Their objectives should be to expand the level of service; improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service; develop improved linkages between providers and related groups; instill positive attitudes; and ensure the availability of adequate support services for participants. (CML)

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REPORT OF THE

LITERACY 2000 TASK FORCE

September, 1988

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Literacy 2000 Task Force, appointed by Dr. Robert P. Sorensen, State Director of the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, with the advice and support of the Executive Branch, was charged with the responsibility of identifying the dimensions of adult illiteracy in Wisconsin and recommending strategies to address that problem. Beginning work in January and continuing through September of 1988, the Literacy 2000 Task Force was composed of thirty-one selected representatives of Wisconsin public and private sectors.

Defining adult literacy as the possession of such skills as reading, writing, speaking and computing necessary to function effectively as individuals, family and community members, citizens, consumers and workers in American society, the Literacy 2000 Task Force discovered 492,720 Wisconsin residents operating at or below the level of functional illiteracy. An additional 412,720 Wisconsin residents were found to be "at-risk" due to increased demand for higher level basic skills in an Information Age society. Several forces contribute to a greater than 10,000 person annual increase in this population: (1) the public school dropout rate, (2) the continuing immigration of persons at the functionally illiterate level, (3) the gradual erosion of basic skills levels through lack of application, and (4) the increasing demand for higher level basic skills in an Information Age society.

There are four principal providers of adult literacy education in Wisconsin: (1) two volunteer groups, (2) several community based organizations, and (3) the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System. In 1987, these organizations served a total of 46,517 participants. This represents five percent of the population in need. Assuming a high school education as the minimal standard for adult literacy, last year 8,644 persons achieved that status, while the population in need grew by more than 10,000 persons.

The Literacy 2000 Task Force recommends the formation of a Wisconsin Literacy Council with a Statewide network of local literacy councils with the goal of achieving universal adult literacy in Wisconsin by the year 2000. With appropriate representation of providers of adult literacy education and related public and private groups, the State and local Councils will work toward the objectives of: (1) expanding the level of service, (2) improving effectiveness and efficiency of service, (3) developing improved linkages among providers and related groups, (4) instilling positive attitudes toward lifelong learning, and (5) insuring the availability of adequate support services for participants. Strategies for achieving the goal and objectives are recommended by the Literacy 2000 Task Force.

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PREFACE

The problem of adult illiteracy deserves dramatically more attention in the future. Other states have also recognized the necessity to attack this nationwide problem that retards our economic and social development. Thus, many people concerned about this problem were heartened in 1988 when a Literacy 2000 Task Force was established in Wisconsin. The following Task Force report is a first step in the lengthy and difficult process of raising public consciousness about the problem so that solutions can be addressed.

The report contains evidence that a serious problem does exist. During this century, the minimum threshold of literacy which enables adults to function satisfactorily in family, work, and community has been steadily rising. Today, that threshold is equivalent to a high school education and social and technological changes are pushing it even higher as we enter the 21st century. All types of jobs are requiring more ability to read, write, speak, listen and understand.

Paradoxically, the problem is becoming worse, not better. In addition to a rising literacy threshold, thousands of adult illiterates are added to the State each year from school dropouts and immigrants from other parts of the country and the world. The problem is complex because conditions such as poverty, family members who don't read, unemployment, health and housing problems, minority status and discrimination add to the problem and detract from solutions.

Wisconsinites are justifiably proud of our educational achievements, so it is painful to confront our adult illiteracy problem. As the report points out, almost a half million Wisconsin adults are functionally illiterate and another four hundred thousand are at-risk of joining the ranks of illiterates. Nationally, over fifty-four million adults are functionally illiterate and at-risk literate, and the proportion in Canada is the same. This retards our social and economic development as it does in other states. One measure of the success of current adult literacy programs in the State is the over eight thousand adults who

annually pass the high school equivalency examination. This is one percent of the adult illiterates and at-risk literates. The problem is becoming worse because more than ten thousand functional illiterates and at-risk literates are being added to the adult population of the State each year. Clearly, the Task Force confronted a serious problem.

The first major Task Force report addresses several ways to strengthen efforts to reduce adult illiteracy in Wisconsin. The main recommendation is to increase State and local level arrangements to promote cooperation among and assistance to the various organizations that provide adult literacy education. Some collaboration is occurring but more would be beneficial. Another recommendation is to improve the local counseling and information services that encourage and assist undereducated adults to participate in various adult literacy education activities. Each of these improvements would indeed strengthen statewide efforts to reduce adult illiteracy.

However, there is much more to be done! Because more functional illiterates are added to the adult population of the State each year than are removed by completion of adult literacy education activities, to simply maintain the current level of effort or to expand it slightly just slows the worsening of the problem, it doesn't help to solve it.

Additional resources can both expand the effort and enable programs to better serve hard-to-reach adults. The first Task Force report can help policymakers and the general public to understand the nature of the problem of adult functional illiteracy in Wisconsin. The next step for the Task Force is to stimulate creation of solutions that match the problem. Substantial progress by the year 2000 is a challenge worthy of the educational tradition of Wisconsin.

Alan B. Knox
Professor of Continuing and Vocational Education
University of Wisconsin-Madison

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LITERACY 2000 TASK FORCE

The Literacy 2000 Task Force recommends adoption of the **goal of universal adult literacy for Wisconsin by the year 2000** for all adults capable of achieving that status.

Further, the Literacy 2000 Task Force believes the goal of universal adult literacy in Wisconsin by the year 2000 could be realized through implementation of the following recommendations.

Recommendation
Formation of a Wisconsin Literacy Council.

The Governor of the State of Wisconsin should appoint and staff a Wisconsin Literacy Council charged with the mission of attaining the goal of universal adult literacy by the year 2000. Progress toward this goal should be evaluated in 1994. In order to accomplish the goal of universal adult literacy the Wisconsin Literacy Council should commit itself to addressing the following objectives.

Objective *Expand adult literacy education services available in the State of Wisconsin.*

The number of people served in adult literacy education should be increased at an annual rate of at least ten percent. This expansion should be achieved by increasing existing services and by implementing new approaches to adult literacy education.

Increased attention should be focused on three key groups: (1) unemployed, "at-risk" employed, and dislocated workers; (2) persons in the young adult (age 20-35) group, as a pivotal intergenerational group and as relatively new members of the workforce; and (3) persons in need of adult literacy education but reluctant to participate.

Activities of the Wisconsin Literacy Council supporting achievement of this objective should be to:

- Assess the adult literacy situation of Wisconsin on a continuing basis;
- Pursue increased public and private resources to support the expansion of adult literacy education services;
- Establish a statewide referral service, including a "Literacy Hotline" (800 number), for persons interested in participating as teachers, students, or contributors in adult literacy education programs;
- Assist policymakers at the State level to develop incentive programs for corrections' clients and persons receiving public assistance to participate in adult literacy education programs; and
- Encourage increased volunteerism in literacy education programs at all levels.

Objective *Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of adult literacy education services.*

In addition to expanding adult literacy education services available, the results of existing services may be intensified through increases in effectiveness and efficiency. Activities of the Wisconsin Literacy Council supporting achievement of this objective should be to:

- Initiate and review policies at the local, state and national levels on matters affecting adult literacy education;
- Establish and maintain a Resource Center to make new curricula, materials, and professional development assistance available to all providers of adult literacy education;
- Commission and fund research and evaluation studies, conducted in Wisconsin settings, to improve the conceptualization and practice of adult literacy education;
- Develop training opportunities for professionals and volunteers engaged in adult literacy education programs; and

- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

Objective *Develop improved linkages among providers of adult literacy education services, media and related interest groups.*

Increased communication among providers and related interest groups should lead to improved cooperation and coordination of services. Activities of the Wisconsin Literacy Council supporting achievement of this objective should be to:

- Recommend a model for establishment of local literacy councils; and
- Create a forum for the critical examination of Wisconsin, national and world adult literacy education issues.

Objective *Instill a positive attitude toward lifelong learning in participants in adult literacy education programs.*

The increasing level of literacy necessary for full participation in American society requires continued involvement in adult learning activities. A positive attitude toward lifelong learning must be one outcome of adult literacy education. Activities of the Wisconsin Literacy Council supporting achievement of this objective should be to:

- Advocate for adults to receive needed literacy and continuing education services in an appropriate and timely fashion; and
- Develop an awareness in the general population of the nature and implications of the Wisconsin, national and world adult literacy situations.

Objective *Increase availability of needed child care, transportation and other support services for participants in adult literacy education programs.*

- Advocate for adults participating in literacy education programs to receive needed resources for child care, transportation and other support services.

The Wisconsin Literacy Council should have a total membership of thirty persons with appropriate representation of women and minorities. Members should be appointed for initial terms of three years followed by staggered one, two or three year appointments for each third of the membership. Where possible, it should be composed of the chief administrator, or that person's designee, from each of the following groups.

- Governor's Office (one representative)
- State Legislature
  - Senate (one representative of each major party)
  - Assembly (one representative of each major party)
- Providers of Adult Literacy Education Services
  - Wisconsin Laubach Literacy (one representative)
  - Literacy Volunteers of America (one representative)
  - Community Based Organizations (one representative)
  - Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System (one adult basic education program representative)
  - Wisconsin Association for Adult and Continuing Education (one representative)
- Current or Former Participants in Adult Literacy Education Programs (three representatives)
- Providers of Elementary, Secondary and Postsecondary Education Services
  - Department of Public Instruction (one representative)

- University of Wisconsin System (one representative)
- Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (one representative)
- Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (one administrative representative)

- Private Sector
  - Business and Industry (one representative)
  - Organized Labor (one representative)
  - Forward Wisconsin (one representative)
- State Agencies Providing Closely Related Services
  - Department of Health and Social Services (one representative)
  - Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (one representative)
  - Educational Communications Board (one representative)
  - Division for Library Services (one representative)
  - Division of Corrections (one representative)
- Local Literacy Councils (three representatives, including one from the Milwaukee area)
- Citizens at Large (two representatives)

The Wisconsin Literacy Council should be administratively attached to the Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education and have a staff of four including a director, two professional literacy educators, and a clerical person.

Recommendation
Formation of Local Literacy Councils.

In each of the sixteen Districts of the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System, one or more *Local Literacy Councils* should be established to meet on a regular basis. Appointed by the VTAE District Director in cooperation with local Public Library System Directors, the *Local Literacy Councils* should be charged to work with the *Wisconsin Literacy Council* toward the goal of universal adult literacy in their respective geographic areas. In order to accomplish this goal, the *Local Literacy Councils* should adopt and implement locally the five objectives of the Wisconsin Literacy Council:

Objective *Expand adult literacy education services available in the local area, with particular emphasis on county involvement;*

Objective *Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local adult literacy education services;*

Objective *Develop improved linkages among providers of adult literacy education services, media and related interest groups;*

Objective *Instill a positive attitude toward lifelong learning in participants in local adult literacy education programs; and*

Objective *Increase availability of needed child care, transportation and other support services for participants in local adult literacy education programs.*

Each *Local Literacy Council* should be composed of representatives of the following groups:

- Providers of local adult literacy education services;
- Providers of local elementary, secondary and postsecondary education services;
- Providers of local services affecting adults in need of literacy education services;
- Local private sector organizations in business, industry and labor;
- Local government;
- Current and former participants in local adult literacy education programs; and
- Citizens at large.

Recommendation
Cooperation and Coordination.

Achieving the goal of universal adult literacy in Wisconsin by the year 2000 will require the close cooperation and coordination of providers of adult literacy education, related services and concerned citizens. Having identified potential areas of cooperation and coordination, the Literacy 2000 Task Force makes the following recommendations to the organizations and individuals involved.

The volunteer adult literacy education organizations, *Wisconsin Laubach Literacy* and the *Literacy Volunteers of America*, should:

- Expand effective adult literacy education programs, with the goal of recruiting and serving the most difficult-to-reach adults at the lowest levels of literacy;
- Explore new approaches to the delivery of adult literacy education programs;
- Strengthen linkages with the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System and the community based organizations to improve referral and advancement of participants among programs;
- Encourage leaders to participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Promote increased volunteerism in literacy education programs at all levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *community based organizations providing adult literacy education services* should:

- Expand effective adult literacy education programs, with the goal of recruiting and serving the most difficult-to-reach adults at the lowest levels of literacy;
- Explore new approaches to the delivery of adult literacy education programs;
- Strengthen linkages with the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System and the volunteer

adult literacy education providers to improve referral and advancement of participants among programs;

- Provide adult literacy education services on an ability to pay basis;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Promote increased volunteerism in literacy education programs at all levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System* should:

- Provide the initiative in cooperation with Public Library Systems for the formation of the State and local literacy councils;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Expand effective adult literacy education programs;
- Explore new approaches to the delivery of adult literacy education programs;
- Strengthen linkages with the volunteer literacy education providers and the community based organizations to improve referral and advancement of participants among programs;
- Promote increased volunteerism on the part of staff and students in literacy education programs at all levels;
- Cooperate with the University of Wisconsin System in the development of training opportunities for professionals and volunteers in adult literacy education programs;
- Provide adult literacy education services at a minimal fee to participants; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *public and other types of libraries* should:

- Cooperate with staff of the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System in providing initiative for the formation of the State and local literacy councils;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Expand the information and referral role for adult literacy education services;
- Promote increased volunteerism in literacy education programs at all levels;
- Expand the development of collections of appropriate materials for participants in adult literacy education programs;
- Make additional space available for one-to-one and small group adult literacy education; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

***State and local governments* should:**

- Increase the resources available for adult literacy education programs, including a high priority for child care and transportation as needed by participants;
- Work with the Wisconsin Literacy Council when developing public policy affecting adult literacy education;
- Initiate awareness efforts to inform the general public and those in need of adult literacy education of the situation and services available;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Promote increased volunteerism in literacy education programs at all levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *Department of Public Instruction in cooperation with local school boards* should:

- Increase efforts at early detection and intervention with students showing problems in basic skills and low competency levels;
- Increase emphasis on basic skills and competency levels in elementary and secondary curricula as a means of preventing adult illiteracy;
- Increase efforts to improve the attendance rate and to lower the dropout rate at all levels of public schools;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Cooperate with adult literacy education providers in intergenerational efforts to improve literacy;
- Encourage increased volunteerism of parents, teachers, staff and students in public school programs and in literacy education programs at all levels;
- Implement statewide third grade basic skills testing and involvement of parents, teachers, administrators, students and community in improving competency levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *University of Wisconsin System and Wisconsin Private Colleges and Universities* should:

- Increase production of professional adult literacy educators for Wisconsin at both the undergraduate and graduate levels;
- Develop training for professionals and volunteers in adult literacy education in cooperation with the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System;
- Conduct research and evaluation studies, utilizing Wisconsin programs and participants, to further define the nature of adult literacy and to improve the practice of adult literacy education and intergenerational approaches to lifelong learning;

- Assist professionals and volunteers to gain a better understanding of learning disabilities and how to address them in adult literacy education programs;
- Involve University of Wisconisin Extension and campus faculty in active participation on the State and local literacy councils;
- Utilize the existing continuing education counseling and referral network for support of adult literacy education and lifelong learning programs;
- Promote increased volunteerism among faculty, staff and students in literacy education programs at all levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

The *Departments of Health and Social Services; Industry, Labor and Human Relations;* and the *Educational Communications Board* should:

- Adopt regulations providing adequate time and incentives to allow participants in agency programs to significantly increase their levels of literacy;
- Make resources for child care and transportation a priority for participants in adult literacy education programs;
- Strengthen coordination of services with adult literacy education providers;
- Promote increased volunteerism of staff in literacy education programs at all levels;
- Adopt an information and referral role in the assistance of persons in need of adult literacy education;
- Assign appropriate staff to participate actively on the State and local literacy councils; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

***Management and Labor in Business and Industry* should:**

- Enlist assistance of adult literacy education providers in identifying and responding to workplace literacy needs;
- Identify entry level basic skills required for positions in business and industry;
- Support adult literacy education efforts with appropriate incentives and resources, including child care and transportation;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Develop working relationships with local elementary and secondary schools to support literacy education efforts;
- Promote increased volunteerism on the part of management and labor in literacy education programs at all levels; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

***Citizens* should:**

- Examine own communities critically to identify adult literacy education needs;
- Support and participate in literacy education efforts at all levels through volunteering time, expertise and resources;
- Engage in and promote lifelong learning opportunities at all levels;
- Participate actively on the State and local literacy councils;
- Inform, encourage and support persons in need of adult literacy eduction to take advantage of the services available; and
- Promote utilization of telecommunications and computer-aided instruction technology in adult literacy education programs.

APPENDIX A

Members of the Literacy 2000 Task Force

Dr. James C. Catania, District Director
Blackhawk VTAE District

The Honorable Marcia Coggs
The State Assembly

Mr. John T. Coughlin, Secretary
Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations

Mr. Timothy F. Cullen, Former Secretary
Department of Health and Social Services

The Honorable Joseph Czarnezki
The State Senate

Ms. Jacqueline DeBaker, Member
Lakeshore Vocational, Technical and Adult Education
District Board

Ms. Lois Gilliland, Developmental Services
Supervisor
North Central VTAE District

Dr. Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent
Department of Public Instruction

Mr. John Hager, State Education Coordinator
IBM Corporation

Mr. James Haney, President
Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce

The Honorable James Harsdorf
The State Senate

Ms. Judy Jorgensen, Manager, Academic Support
Waukesha County Area VTAE District

Mr. Mark Kearns, President
Wisconsin Association of Adult and Continuing
Education

Ms. Thelma McLester
Oneida Education and Job Training Office

Mr. Paul Norton, Executive Director
Wisconsin Educational Communications Board

Ms. Audrey O'Harrow
Wisconsin Jobs Council

The Honorable Calvin Potter
The State Assembly

Mr. George Pratt, General Education/Special Needs Coordinator
Wisconsin Indianhead VTAE District

Mr. Jack B. Reihl, President
Wisconsin State AFL-CIO

Ms. Mary Ann Shaw
Member at Large

Mr. Mark Skarich, Joint Training Coordinator
General Motors Corporation

Dr. Robert P. Sorensen, State Director
Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education

Dr. Linda Stewart, Chairperson
Milwaukee Area Vocational, Technical and Adult Education District Board

Ms. Deborah Streuli, Vice Chairperson
Wisconsin Indianhead Vocational, Technical and Adult Education District Board

Dr. Patricia Travis, District Director
Nicolet VTAE District

Dr. Daniel VanEyck, Senior Academic Planner
University of Wisconsin System

Mr. Pedro Viera
SER - Jobs for Progress

Mr. Ray Wagner, President
Wisconsin Laubach Literacy

Ms. Joan M. Waite
Coldwell-Banker-Boutelle Realty Agency

The Honorable Dwight York
The State Assembly

APPENDIX B

Staff of the Literacy 2000 Task Force

Wisconsin Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education Staff to the Literacy 2000 Task Force:

Mr. Glenn A. Davison, Assistant State Director

Mr. James Urness, Director
Bureau of Program Development and Operations

Ms. Mary Ann Jackson, Consultant, Adult Basic Education

Mr. Louis Chinnaswamy, Consultant, Adult Basic Education

Dr. James R. Mayhew, Consultant, Adult Literacy Education

APPENDIX C

Approach Used by the Literacy 2000 Task Force

Four questions guided the approach of the Literacy 2000 Task Force in its examination of the adult literacy situation of Wisconsin: (1) who are the illiterates to be helped, (2) how do current efforts compare with the need and goals, (3) how broad a strategy is necessary, and (4) what is required to close the gap. A three part process of information collection, processing and development of recommendations was adopted.

Monthly meetings of the Literacy 2000 Task Force from January through April were devoted to the collection of information from adult literacy education providers, participants in adult literacy education programs, related organizations, concerned citizens, and state literacy initiatives in Indiana and Minnesota. Simultaneous public meetings were held during April in Eau Claire, Green Bay and Milwaukee to receive testimony from citizens throughout the State.

The May and June meetings of the Literacy 2000 Task Force were devoted to the processing of the information collected into issues in the practice of adult literacy education. A large number of issues were identified and sorted into four categories for further exploration: (1) what is the level of awareness of the people of Wisconsin of the adult literacy situation, (2) what criteria should be used to identify potential populations to be served and to establish priorities among them, (3) how can better cooperation and coordination of adult literacy education services be achieved, and (4) what are the most promising current and future sources of public and private sector resources for adult literacy education?

The formulation of recommendations to address the adult literacy situation of Wisconsin and development

of the final Literacy 2000 Task Force report were the primary concerns of the August and September meetings. The recommendations will be utilized by the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System and forwarded to the Governor's Office, other literacy education providers, and interested citizens to serve as guidelines for the development of a literacy initiative in the State of Wisconsin.

APPENDIX D

The Wisconsin Adult Literacy Situation

In assessing the adult literacy situation of the State of Wisconsin, the Literacy 2000 Task Force addressed the following questions:

- What are the statewide dimensions and structure of the population in need of adult literacy education?
- What are the major factors causing increase in the population in need of adult literacy education?
- What are the current levels and types of adult literacy education services available?
- How does the need for adult literacy education compare with the level of service available?

What are the Statewide dimensions and structure of the population in need of adult literacy education?

National efforts to determine the size and structure of the population in need of adult literacy education have met with difficulties of definition and measurement. These studies have utilized both direct measurement of competence and indicator based approaches. The Literacy 2000 Task Force defined adult literacy as the possession of such skills as reading, writing, speaking and computing necessary to function effectively as individuals, family and community members, citizens, consumers and workers in American society and used grade level completion as its primary measure of adult literacy in Wisconsin.

A categorization scheme for adults in need of literacy education proposed by Harvard Professor Jeanne Chall was applied to develop a picture of the adult literacy situation in the State from 1980 census data. Reported grade level completion was taken as the measure of adult literacy according to the following definitions.

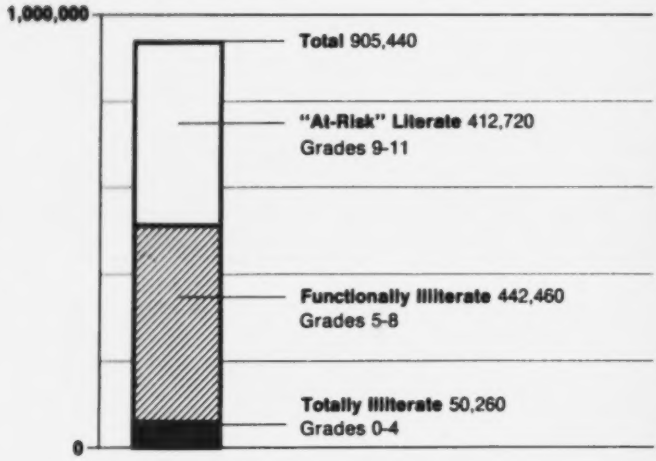
- **Totally illiterate** was used to describe persons having completed up through grade four reflecting acquisition of at most the rudiments of reading in recognition and decoding. Persons at this level are not able to acquire new information from the materials read.
- **Functionally illiterate** was used to describe individuals completing grades five through eight reflecting the acquisition of skills necessary to learn new information from reading. Persons at this level have basic skills sufficient only for minimal survival.

For the State of Wisconsin in 1980, census data for grade level completion indicated the following number of persons in the categories of illiteracy.

Category of Illiteracy	Number	Percentage of Adults
Totally illiterate	50,260	1.64
Functionally illiterate	442,460	14.44
Illiterate Adults in Wisconsin	492,720	16.08

Persons having completed some high school education, but not graduated, generally have substantial basic skills. However, those skills may not be sufficient to keep pace with the rate of change in American society. This group is "at-risk" literate, a reflection of the increased requirements in an information Age, where the equivalent of high school graduation is generally considered to be the minimum standard. In Wisconsin 412,720 persons completed grades nine through eleven according to the 1980 census data. This brings the total population in need of adult literacy education to 905,440 including totally illiterate, functionally illiterate and "at-risk" literate.

Chart 1. Dimensions of Illiteracy



Further analysis of the census data was completed to examine age, gender, metropolitan-nonmetropolitan and minority representation in the categories of illiteracy and at-risk literacy.

- *Age:* In the *totally* and *functionally illiterate* categories the age distribution was skewed toward the older groups. In the *totally illiterate* group over 44% was age 70 and over. In the *functionally illiterate* group over 41% was age 70 and over. However, in the at-risk literate group only 12% was age 70 and over, with the distribution being generally flat for age groups up to age 70.
- *Gender:* The representation of men is higher than would be expected from the general population distribution in the categories of illiteracy and at-risk literacy.
- *Metropolitan-Nonmetropolitan:* The population of adults in the *totally* and *functionally illiterate* categories in nonmetropolitan areas was higher

than would be expected from the overall population distribution. Similarly, in metropolitan areas the concentration of adults in the at-risk literate category was higher than would be expected.

- *Minority-Majority:* A higher percentage of minorities than would be expected from the general population distribution was observed in each of the categories of illiteracy and at-risk literacy.

What are the major factors causing increase in the population in need of adult literacy education?

Four primary factors contributing to increase in the size of the population in need of adult literacy education were identified by the Literacy 2000 Task Force: (1) the elementary and secondary school attendance and dropout rates and the overall competency level of students, (2) the migration to Wisconsin of groups in need of adult literacy and English as a second language education, (3) the erosion of basic skills through low rates of practice, and (4) the increased level of basic skills required to function effectively in an Information Age society.

- *Elementary and Secondary School Attendance and Dropout Rates and the Overall Competency Level of Students:* Of these factors the most direct measure of change in the population of illiterates and at-risk literates is the school dropout rate. However, the other factors, although more difficult to assess, are of equal importance. The most recent determination of the public school dropout rate by the Department of Public Instruction was for the school year 1986-1987. The dropout rate based on a comparison of total dropouts per year with grade 9-12 enrollments was 3.24%, which represents 8,372 persons. With the increased requirements for basic skills consistent with an Information Age society, this group adds primarily to the at-risk population.
- *Immigration:* The immigration of groups to Wisconsin from various regions of the world and the United States has added to the population in need of adult literacy and English as a second language education. The Wisconsin Refugee

Assistance Office estimated an Indochinese refugee population of 21,032 in May, 1988. This group increased by 2,134 persons between May, 1987, and May, 1988. Non-Indochinese refugee and Cuban/Haitian populations numbered 1,936 in 1987. Although not all of the refugees are in need of adult literacy education, the number in need is relatively high. These groups cut across all levels of literacy.

- *Erosion of Basic Skills:* The erosion of basic skills without continuing practice is another factor in the increase of the number of persons in need of adult literacy education. The actual contribution of this process to the population in need on an annual basis is difficult to measure. However, the rate of erosion of basic skills appears to be higher at the lower grade level completions.
- *Increased Requirements for Literacy in an Information Age Society:* A rapidly increasing literacy requirement for full participation in American society was the final factor identified by the Literacy 2000 Task Force. Until recently persons having completed grades nine through eleven, were considered sufficiently literate for American lifestyles. However, recently the level of required basic skills has increased to, and possibly moved beyond, a minimum of the equivalent of high school graduation.

In total, these factors contribute to a conservative estimate of annual increase in the population in need of adult literacy education in excess of 10,000 persons.

What are the current levels and types of adult literacy education services available?

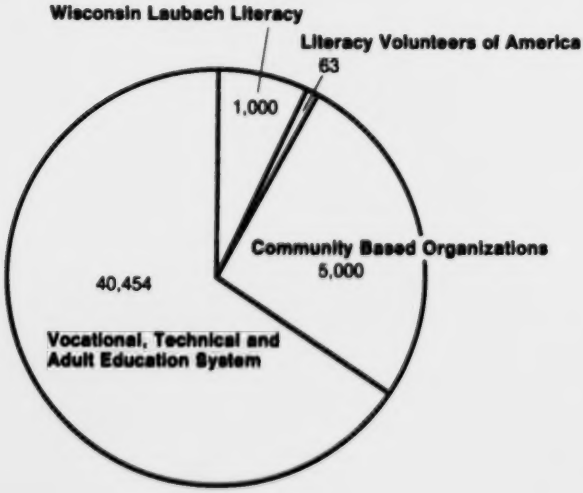
Two volunteer organizations, many community based organizations, and the Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System are the major providers of adult literacy education for illiterates and at-risk literates in Wisconsin. The volunteer organizations are *Wisconsin Laubach Literacy* with approximately thirty Literacy Councils located throughout the State and the *Literacy Volunteers of America* with a group in the Eau Claire area. More than forty-five

community based organizations offer adult literacy education as a primary or secondary service and tend to be located in more populous areas of the State. The *Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System* is the largest of the providers with sixteen districts and forty-four campuses blanketing the State.

Recent statistics on the annual level of service, measured by the number of participants, for each of the adult literacy education providers indicate the following:

Provider	Annual Level of Service
Wisconsin Laubach Literacy	1,000
Literacy Volunteers of America	63
Community Based Organizations	5,000
Vocational, Technical and Adult Education System	40,454
Total	46,517

Chart 2. Current Annual Levels of Service



This use of the number of participants as the level of overall service is difficult to interpret since the amounts of time spent and progress made on an individual basis vary substantially. The programs are often open-entry and open-exit so that a particular person may participate in several programs with varying rates of progress. In addition, many persons take and satisfy the requirements of the high school equivalency test without having been directly involved in an adult literacy program.

Although improvement at every level of literacy is important, the completion of the equivalent of a high school education is generally considered the ultimate goal of adult literacy education in the United States. In this context completion of the national high school equivalency credential of General Educational Development (GED) is an indicator, although limited, of the overall progress made through the efforts of the adult literacy education providers. However, it should be noted that recently the General Educational Development credential has been challenged as an insufficiently demanding measure of high school equivalency. The following statistics for Wisconsin were reported by the General Educational Development Testing Service of the American Council on Education.

GED Testing	1986	1987	Increase
Number of persons tested	14,157	15,964	12.8%
Number meeting score requirements	7,806	8,644	10.7%

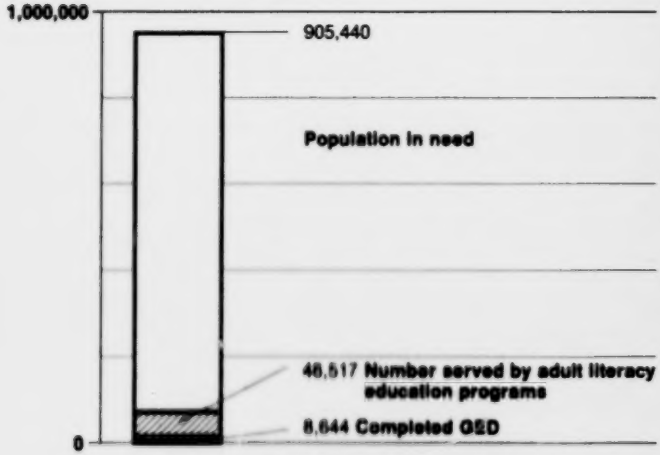
During the period from 1971 through 1987, the General Educational Development Testing Service issued high school equivalency credentials to 118,454 persons in Wisconsin upon successful completion of the examination.

How does the need for adult literacy education compare with the level of service available?

Many comparisons between the level of service and the level of need in adult literacy education are possible. The total number of persons participating in the various levels and types of adult literacy

education programs last year was 46,517. This represents a level of service of just over five percent of the population in need of adult literacy education. Assuming high school graduation or the equivalent to be the minimal measure of adult literacy for full participation in American society, the number of adults achieving that status last year was 8,644. This represents less than one percent of the 905,440 adults in Wisconsin in the illiterate and at-risk literate categories. Taking into account the annual increase of more than 10,000 persons and in spite of the efforts of adult literacy education providers, the population in need appears to be growing at the rate of more than 1,000 persons each year.

Chart 3. Comparison of Population in Need with Population Served



5% of population in need was served last year.
1% of population in need completed GED.

APPENDIX E

Some Principles of Practice

In reflecting on the information received by the Literacy 2000 Task Force, several principles for the practice of literacy education for adults and children emerged. These principles, while limited in scope, strongly influenced the development of the recommendations presented in this report. The Literacy 2000 Task Force believes these principles may be of interest and use to those who are involved in the design and operation of adult literacy education programs.

- Literacy should be considered a *means,* as well as an *end;*
- Literacy education services should be *available to* and *accessible by* all Wisconsin residents;
- Literacy education should be developed in a *community context;*
- The *diverse nature of the population to be served* by literacy education should be recognized;
- Literacy education services should use a *variety of approaches* to address the diverse population in need;
- The population to be served by literacy education should be *involved* in the program development decisions;
- A *system* of literacy education can be more effective and efficient than individual providers operating independently; and
- Literacy begins in *early childhood* and extends *throughout the lifetime.*